

Transportation Resources

Introduction

The following discloses the effects to transportation resources by the implementation of the alternatives considered in this EA.

Affected Environment

Highway 244 is a paved two-lane state highway intended for passenger vehicle and highway legal vehicle use which runs through the project area. Non-highway legal OHVs are not permitted to use this highway. It is a very high-use road providing access from Interstate 84 to the town of Ukiah and several major access roads to the forest (Forest Roads 51, 21, 2120, 2444, 5160) all of which are high-use roads. Highway 244 is currently well maintained; however, is often at risk to ice damage during winter.

There are no roads within the portion of the project area surrounding the Grande Ronde River north of Highway 244. Approximately 1.5 miles of native surface single lane roads are located just outside of the project area within the Bird Track Springs Campground and another half mile of native surface road is located on the north side of the Grande Ronde River outside of the riparian habitat conservation area.

A total of approximately 14.6 miles of roads are located within the Jordan Creek Ranch area, a portion of which is within the project area with the remainder adjacent to the project area. The main road into the Jordan Creek Ranch is a single lane graveled road with single lane native surface roads off of it. These roads would provide adequate access into the timbered stands where some wood, racking materials, and large boulders would be harvested from.

Effects Analysis

The following describes the effects of implementing this project on transportation resources.

No Direct, Indirect, or Cumulative Effects

The following activities in the action alternative would have a negligible potential to affect transportation opportunities in the project area:

- Instream enhancement work (large wood placement, gravel and boulder placement, new channel construction, temporary river crossings, dewatering basins and coffer dams, gravel bar construction)
- Stockpile of overage materials
- Construction and decommissioning of stockpile sites
- Planting and revegetation

These activities will not be discussed further in this analysis.

Direct and Indirect Effects on Transportation

Alternative 1 – No Action Alternative

No restoration activities would occur under this alternative; therefore, there would be no direct or indirect effects to the transportation system within the project area. Impacts from winter ice flows would continue to impact Highway 244.

Alternative 2 – Proposed Action

Short term (during the life of project implementation) increases in access within the project area would occur under the proposed action. Approximately 1.65 miles of temporary access roads would be constructed to facilitate restoration activities such as channel realignment and instream placement of large wood structures. These temporary roads would be restricted to administrative access for project implementation only and would be decommissioned and planted with native species at the conclusion of project activities.

The road system on Jordan Creek Ranch would remain the same under this alternative. Because harvest and removal of woody materials is restricted to dry conditions only existing road conditions should be adequate to meet hauling needs while protecting road surface conditions. These roads are not available for public use and would remain so following the completion of this project.

As described in the Recreation effects section, the project area would be under an area closure during project activities to ensure public and construction crew safety. Use agreements would be negotiated with the La Grande Rifle and Pistol Club to allow for their permitted use within the project area. No changes to access on private lands would occur under this alternative.

Project design providing areas for ice to flow away from Highway 244 should remediate winter ice issues within the project area and protect the highway. The installation of additional rocks (rip rap) along stream reaches near the highway would help protect the highway embankment from additional scour and potential damage along the north side of the highway. Access permits would be applied for where right of way access from the highway is not currently permitted. Project features would be vetted by Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) to ensure protection of the highway.

Large wood structure materials, locations, and construction specifics have been designed and modeled to minimize any movement during spring high water and flood events. These designs have also been vetted by ODOT to limit potential large woody debris entanglement/scour issues on Highway 244 or downstream bridges.

Cumulative Effects on Transportation

Analysis of the present and reasonably foreseeable future activities within the project area were analyzed in Appendix D of this EA to determine which of those activities may overlap in time and space with this project and have the potential to result in a cumulative effect when added to the activities proposed in each of the alternatives. Past activities have been incorporated into the analysis of the existing condition.

Alternative 1 – No Action Alternative

No activities would occur under this alternative which could affect the transportation system; therefore, there would be no potential for cumulative effects to the transportation system as a result of selection of the no action alternative.

Alternative 2 – Proposed Action

Most of the present/on-going and reasonably foreseeable future projects do not overlap in time and space with the project area. Of the projects that overlap in time and space only the Bird Track Springs Fish Enhancement Project and maintenance planned on Highway 244 would have a measureable beneficial cumulative effect when added to the activities proposed in this alternative. The additional protection provided to Highway 244 by the project design of the Bird Track project and this project along with additional maintenance provided during log and material source haul would not only improve the highway condition and improve safety for vehicles using this stretch of highway but also provide for improved resource protection (soils, invasive species, etc.).

Forest Plan Compliance

Implementation of this project ensures compliance with the Wallowa-Whitman Forest Plan Transportation System goals, standards, and guidelines (Forest Plan pp. 4-34 through 4-36). This project will provide for safe, efficient, environmentally-sound access for the movement of people and materials involved in the use and management of these National Forest lands.